

# Preliminary Plan Concepts

Braddock Road Metro Small Area Plan

November 10, 2005

## Introduction

This paper offers a review of preliminary principles and planning concepts for the Braddock Road Metro Small Area Plan. These were developed and discussed during public workshops held in June 2004 and reviewed with community stakeholders in July and August. These principles and concepts will serve as the starting point for the development of planning and design alternatives which will be presented and reviewed in public workshops scheduled for the Fall of 2005.

The preliminary principles and planning concepts are presented under the following categories:

- A Collection of Urban Neighborhoods
- Walkable Streets, Accessible Transit & Available Parking
- Clusters of Retail Uses
- New & Improved Public Spaces
- Conserving & Celebrating History
- Housing for All

## A Collection of Urban Neighborhoods

Rather than think about the study area as a single neighborhood or destination in the City, the planning team has started to conceive of the Braddock area as a collection urban neighborhoods, each with their own character and identity. This approach recognizes the history, scale, pattern, and unique potential of sub-districts within the study area and provides a starting point for the development of plan recommendations. The following three urban neighborhoods have been defined: the Parker-Gray Neighborhood, Braddock Center, and Braddock Gateway.

## Parker-Gray Neighborhood

- **Planning Concept.** Focus on preserving the historic fabric of the neighborhood with allowances for modest additions, small-scale infill projects, and stabilization and enhancement of the Queen Street commercial corridor.
- **Uses & Intensity.** Predominantly lower density residential uses with small scale retail, professional service, restaurants, and offices permitted in designated locations.
- **Urban Form.** Small scale buildings with shallow or no street setbacks defining a grid of walkable streets. (Evaluate existing regulations affecting the scale and character of development, focusing on code provisions addressing height, set backs, and lot coverage.)
- **Streets, Transit & Parking.** Focus streetscape and crossing improvements on select North-South (West and Fayette) and East-West (Wythe, Oronoco and Queen) Streets. Better manage parking resources.
- **Public Spaces.** Improve existing parks and public spaces.

## Braddock Center Neighborhood

- **Planning Concept.** Promote the development of a transit oriented, mixed use neighborhood with urban amenities, active streets, and access to transit.
- **Uses & Intensity.** Plan for moderate to high density mix of residential and office uses with clusters of shops and restaurants at the Metro Station and along portions of Fayette Street. Explore a range of options for the redesign of the Metro Station site, including modest improvements to access and circulation, the creation of a new public square, and moderate to high density housing or office development.
- **Urban Form & Design.** Plan for mid to high rise urban buildings defining street space with step backs in height to serve as transitions to Parker-Gray neighborhood and sites designated for conservation. Develop guidelines addressing height limits and frontage designs/uses for sites where new development is anticipated. Consider encouraging architecture that reflects and interprets the area's industrial history.
- **Streets, Transit & Parking.** Focus streetscape and crossing improvements at the Metro station and along Wythe and Fayette Streets. Study design options to create a more direct connection between Braddock and Wythe Streets.
- **Public Spaces.** Explore potential for new public space at the Metro Station and new landscaped trail in place of the current bus alley north of the Metro Station.

## Braddock Gateway Neighborhood

- **Planning Concept.** Continue the neighborhood's transition from an industrial and warehouse district to a new urban neighborhood and gateway to Braddock and Old Town.

- **Uses & Intensity.** Moderate to high density mix of residential and office uses with a modest cluster of retail uses at Fayette and First Streets.
- **Urban Form & Design.** Mid to high rise urban buildings defining street space with step backs in height from Jefferson Davis Highway frontage. Explore potential for higher buildings at north end to reinforce gateway and alternatives for conserving views to the Washington Monument. Encourage designs that are respectful to Alexandria but reflect and interpret the area's history.
- **Streets, Transit & Parking.** Focus streetscape and crossing improvements along Fayette Streets and at the intersection of First and Jefferson Davis Highway. Explore potential for wider sidewalks along portions of Fayette and for the redesign of Jefferson Davis Highway, Patrick, and Henry to improve pedestrian crossings and allow for future transit improvements.
- **Public Spaces.** Arrange development around a new public space or square at the north end of Fayette. Develop a landscaped trail along Metro from the bus alley to the planned trail connection at Slaters Lane.

## Walkable Streets, Accessible Transit & Available Parking

People in the community value their ability to walk to a wide variety of destinations. Within modest walking or biking distance are several neighborhood parks, two city recreation centers, shops and restaurants along Queen and King Streets, two Metro Stations, and regional amenities like the Mount Vernon trail and Potomac riverfront. But while the area is more walkable than more suburban locations in the city and region, several factors—poor sidewalk conditions, high traffic volumes, uncomfortable street crossings, and the lack of amenities—limit the attractiveness of walking and biking as alternatives to driving.

To improve conditions for pedestrians, several streets have been preliminarily identified as priority streets for streetscape and crossing improvements—West and Fayette running north and south and First, Wythe, Oronoco, and Queen Streets running east west are the focus of further study. To improve pedestrian access to transit, the planning team also will explore design alternatives for the Metro site and routing and stop locations for existing and planned bus service.

### Streets & Intersections

- Focus streetscape and crossing improvements on West and Fayette Streets and on First, Wythe, Oronoco, and Queen Streets.
- Adjust signal timing along Patrick and Henry to allow more time for pedestrian crossings at First, Wythe, Oronoco, and Queen Streets.

- Continue efforts to calm traffic and ease pedestrian crossings along Cameron Street.
- Evaluate strategies to minimize the speed and volume of cut-through traffic on residential streets.

## Transit

- Encourage the use of transit through the improvement of connections to the Metro Station and the routing of planned Bus Rapid Transit service.
- Evaluate opportunities for the relocation of bus, kiss-and-ride, or taxi operations to a new western entrance to the Metro Station.
- Improve streetscape and pedestrian crossing conditions along streets surrounding the Metro Station.
- Explore alternative routes and stop locations for the planned BRT service connecting Braddock Metro station with Crystal City.

## Parking

- Better manage existing parking resources and ensure new parking efficiently and effectively serves demand.
- Prepare recommendations for the better management of on-street parking resources.
- Evaluate adequacy of requirements for the provision of off-street parking for new development.

## Clusters of Retail Uses

The planning team's preliminary assessment of the potential for new retail uses in the district confirms community perceptions that the area is underserved. According to the preliminary assessment, the area can readily support new retail offerings.

- Leverage the presence of existing and encourage the development of new retail offerings to serve the needs of existing and future residents and contribute to the creation of lively street environment.
- Reinforce existing clusters of retail use at the Braddock Metro Station and encourage the development of new clusters at Fayette and First and along Fayette between Pendleton and Madison.
- Encourage stabilization and enhancement of the Queen Street retail corridor.
- Encourage new retail development with multiple, direct entries onto public sidewalks, generous display windows, and interesting canopies, signage, and lighting.

- Minimize the negative impact of larger footprint retail uses by requiring street front entries, discouraging curb cuts for parcel pick-up, encouraging “liner” retail space along prominent street frontages, and locating loading and parking access on side streets.

## New & Improved Public Spaces

The community benefits from the presence of a number of city-owned public spaces and recreation amenities, including two City recreation centers, playgrounds and fields at Jefferson-Houston Elementary School, the small park at Queen and Fayette, the recreation trail running parallel to the Metro tracks, the green spaces at the Braddock Road Metro station, and the small mid-block open spaces on the blocks north and south of Pendleton between West Street and Payne Street. These spaces, with appropriate improvements, and the addition of a few strategically-located new spaces and trail connections, can strongly influence the area’s livability and attractiveness.

During the workshop, the planning team explored opportunities for improving existing spaces and creating new ones, including a new public square at the Metro Station, a new urban green at the northern end of Fayette, and a new pedestrian bicycle trail connecting Braddock Road Metro to Slaters Lane.

- Prepare and evaluate alternatives for the creation of new spaces, focusing on the potential for new public spaces at the Braddock Metro and in the Braddock Gateway neighborhood.
- Identify opportunities for the creation of new public spaces on sites with development potential.
- Explore the feasibility of converting the bus alley north of Braddock Metro to a landscaped trail.
- Define the extent of space required for a future connection of the Metro greenway from the water tower to the Slaters Lane underpass.

## Conserving & Celebrating History

Workshop participants often cited as an asset the area’s rich and interesting history. Following the workshop, the planning team will explore ways to strengthen City policy to conserve resources and ensure new development “fits” well with the neighborhood.

- Identify historically significant buildings and sites outside the boundaries of the Parker-Gray and Old and Historic Alexandria Historic Districts including those expected to be affected under the 100 year old provision for protection.
- Explore appropriateness of expanding boundaries of the Parker-Gray Historic District.
- Build understanding of and appreciation for the area's history through expanded public information, education and interpretive programs.

## Housing for All

Many residents view the area's diversity of housing as an asset and expressed support for the existing City policy to provide for a range of housing needs. While there was some disagreement about the extent and location of low income housing, the community recognizes the value of maintaining a mix of unit types and prices close to Metro.

- Develop guidelines and incentives that encourage the provision of housing for moderate and low income residents.